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DO SHOPPING LISTS HELP IN SAVING TIME DURING ONLINE GROCERY SHOPPING? A QUALITATIVE STUDY AMONG ITALIAN CONSUMERS

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Abstract

Numerous past studies have analised the usage of shopping lists for grocery shopping. Among all their functions, they seem to save time in store. With the incumbency of the digital channel, literature has started to investigate the role of shopping lists for egrocery shopping. One particular study suggested that shopping lists may not apport benefits in terms of saving time, since the online channel reduces the time lag already, as past research has mainly underlined. However, product research task may still need improvements. Therefore, the present study will investigate whether shopping lists enable to save time during egrocery shopping.

Keywords

Shopping lists, grocery shopping, online grocery shopping, online channel, Italian consumers, saved preferences

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1.Introduction

Grocery retailing is currently facing an unprecedented scenario, arising from the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. Social isolation and population lock-down, aimed at mitigating further spread of the novel coronavirus, are affecting grocery shopping habits across the world. Many consumers have modified their baskets' composition, in terms of quantity and type of goods purchased. Shoppers from several countries, encouraged to decrease store visits frequencies, are facing in-store restrictions to avoid crowding. Furthermore, many individuals have decided to purchase their groceries online, instead of heading to the physical store.

Online shopping had already been increasing globally in the last decade, as a result of improvements in infrastructure (speed and cost), participation, transparency and trust. Certain categories, such as fashion and travel, have been growing faster than others in the grocery area, particularly packaged and fresh goods (Nielsen, 2020). However, online grocery shopping has become increasingly popular (Davydenko & Peetz, 2020) and today's peculiar situation might drive an even faster expansion.

In fact, social isolation has generated an unprecedented shift in human social interactions from dominantly offline to dominantly online. Along with, for instance, learning, meeting and entertaining, those "human social interactions" include shopping (Yan, 2020). Digital connectivity is becoming part of everyday habits, with millions of individuals working from home: as a consequence, consumers might, also in the future, experience greater motivation towards technology-enabled solutions to assist in everyday tasks, including grocery shopping (Nielsen, 2020).

Both current and future e-grocery retailers are facing an unprecedented opportunity, but they need to transform this favorable consumer attitude into lasting purchasing behaviour. They have to identify consumer needs, focusing on the barriers that may prevent the online channel's adoption for grocery shopping during tomorrow's "new normal". Findings from online

consumer behaviour studies might provide significant support. Thus, this paper aims to contribute to existing research in the field.

During the last decade, various studies have focused on online grocery shopping, mainly underlining how consumers are driven by the rapidity and efficiency of this channel (Melis et al.,2016; Noble et al., 2005). Recently, research has started to consider the usage of shopping lists for online grocery shopping, in particular illustrating the impact of shopping lists on the number of items purchased and money spent (Davydenko & Peetz, 2020). Nonetheless, further investigations on whether shopping lists allow e-grocery shoppers to save time may further contribute to present literature.

Indeed, one of the intended benefits of shopping lists is to save time during shopping. However, the online channel may reduce the time lag already and no additional benefits may derive from list-making (Davydenko & Peetz, 2020). Past research has shown how the online channel may reduce the duration of the shopping trip (Singh, 2019). However, the time spent on online grocery shopping may vary considering different shoppers' characteristics (Farag et al., 2007). Moreover, consumers might still benefit from the usage of shopping lists online since the product research process may result as less familiar than offline.

For these reasons, focusing on the contribution of shopping lists to the time spent on grocery shopping may add value to existing research. Therefore, this paper intends to consider the following research question: "do shopping lists provide any additional benefit for the time spent in online stores?".

2. Literature review

2.1. Making lists for grocery shopping

Grocery shopping requires not only financial resources but also a significant amount of effort, with multiple decisions and numerous distractions involved (Block & Morwitz, 1999).

Shoppers have to find a limited amount of items among thousands of products and may follow habitual routes or use cues to simplify their tasks (Sorensen, 2009). In other words, consumers may rely on aids to simplify their decision- making process. Writing a shopping list before the shopping trip may help shoppers in achieving their goals and make the shopping trip itself more efficient (Arnaud et al., 2014).

In fact, part of the shopping event planning consists of creating a shopping list and shopping lists represent one way to make the shopping goal more concrete, by creating specific plans for a behaviour (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Davydenko & Peetz, 2020). Moreover, shopping lists may function as an external memory aid. Cognitive psychologists call memory aid any tool or device used to enhance remembering. External memory aids are tangible memory prompts, external to the person (Block & Morwitz, 1999).

In addition to that, the influence of shopping lists usage over the number of items purchased and money spent at the end of the shopping trip has been the subject of several investigations, leading, in some cases, to opposite conclusions (i.e., Davydenko & Peetz, 2020; Gilbert et al., 2002; Inman et al., 2009; Hui et al. 2013). Moreover, different and multiple categories have emerged from a particular qualitative study. In particular, "extras" (i.e. shopping lists allow the acquisition of special products over and above listed items) may suggest anticipated divergence, adding a different perspective from the purpose of not forgetting or not overbuying (Thomas & Garland, 2004).

Finally, shopping lists may also serve as a script to optimise the time spent in-store (Thomas & Garland, 1996; Iyer & Ahlawat, 1987). Consumers frequently encounter limitations on time available for shopping. Such limitations may influence in-store decision-making process and outcomes, by causing stress or inhibiting the extent to which information is processed, generating a trade-off between speed and accuracy (Park et al.,1989). Shopping lists may contribute to reducing this trade-off.

Indeed, findings from Generation Y consumers' interviews show that shopping lists, other than being used as memory aids, to plan the shopping event and save money, also enable shoppers to save time in-store. Interviewees stated, in some cases, that shopping lists would function as "maps" for their shopping trips, allowing them to not waste time going back and forth to the same section of the store. In other cases, time-saving would arise from just looking straight for the listed items, instead of spending time in the store thinking about which products they needed to purchase (Arnaud, Kollman, & Berndt, 2014). Moreover, a recent study has focused on the role of shopping lists over inter choice time (i.e. the time consumers spend between sequential product choices), to understand consumers' motivation- inversely related to inter choice time- to complete a shopping trip. (Suher et al., 2019).

2.2 The online channel

There may be other aspects of interest concerning the relationship between the usage of grocery shopping lists and time spent in-store. Even though past research has highlighted how shopping lists may help consumers in saving time in physical stores, the effect of shopping lists on saving time may or may not extend to online grocery shopping. Online shopping may reduce the time lag already and there may be no additional benefits- in terms of saving time in online stores- of list-making (Davydenko & Peetz, 2020).

Indeed, differences in channel characteristics may affect shopping behaviour from various perspectives. Shoppers may, for instance, pay more or less attention to certain search attributes, such as brand name and price (Degeratu et al., 2000), or they may tend to purchase more or fewer vices (Huyghe et al., 2017). Time spent shopping is one relevant characteristic that may differentiate online from brick and mortar purchasing behaviour: is time spent to find a category or brand higher online or offline? And the overall duration of a grocery shopping trip?

Past research suggests that online grocery shopping is driven by utilitarian considerations, such as saving time and convenience (Melis et al.,2016; Noble et al., 2005, Singh, 2019). Consumers explicitly reported that they use the online channel to save time (Ramus and Nielsen, 2005; Richmond, 1996). Indeed, the use of the online channel avoids both visiting the physical store and manually picking/ packing products (Huang & Oppewal, 2006). Physically moving through the store may be significantly time-consuming, more than just selecting items (Huiet al., 2009). Online shopping, on the other hand, bypasses travelling and check out. Moreover, saved cookies and preferences might simplify the product research task (Anesbury et al., 2016).

The online channel seems, overall, to reduce the time lag of a shopping trip, even when considering "first time" online shoppers. One particular study, conducted over subjects with no previous online grocery shopping experience, suggests that the overall shopping trip resulted much quicker online, but category selection times were slightly longer online than in-store (Anesbury et al., 2016). Moreover, several person-level, such as age, employment status, as well as household-level variables (e.g., number of vehicles) may play a role in the duration of shopping (Farag et al., 2007; Srinivasan & Bhat, 2004).

2.3 The present research

The previous sub-section highlights how past research has focused on the rapidity of the online channel for grocery shopping. The efficiency of both travelling to the physical store and selecting items is emphasised. However, it also appoints how such rapidity may be attributed to the whole online grocery shopping process, while time spent for category research seems comparable to the one in a physical store, even slightly higher than the one offline. Therefore, the online product research process may still present a margin of improvement, in terms of rapidity and efficiency. Online grocery shoppers may benefit from the usage of aids to support

the items selection task, such as shopping lists, as well as they seem to do in physical stores.

As it has been observed, saved items and preferences may facilitate online product research. Saved items may be considered as a particular type of shopping list. However, their function is limited to products that consumers buy frequently, while there may be other purchases that are not repeated. For this reason, a study centered on the role of shopping lists on time spent for grocery shopping may contribute to past research, both the one centered on the usage of shopping lists and of the online channel for grocery shopping.

The present study will, indeed, investigate whether there are any additional benefits in the usage of shopping lists for online grocery shopping. In particular, the motives behind the research answer will be analysed: the objective is to provide an accurate understanding of online grocery shoppers behaviour. For this purpose, the research was conducted by interviewing selected candidates. The sampling and interview procedure, along with data analysis, will be illustrated in the next section.

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure and sample

The present study is based on semi-structured individual in-depth interviews, a qualitative research method. Indeed, the objective was to understand candidates behaviour as online grocery shopping consumers, investigating whether they consider shopping lists as time-saving or not and deepening the motives behind their choice. In-depth interviews allowed to focus on their motivations, views and opinions.

Interviews had an open-ended format and were semi-structured, in order to adapt the questions to the specific situation and to obtain an as complete as possible understanding of the motivations behind interviewees' evaluation of shopping lists. However, some pre-defined questions, shown in the appendix, were used as guidelines.

In particular, all interviews started by asking candidates to recall their last online grocery shopping experience. Besides being asked whether they considered shopping lists as time-saving or not, participants were questioned about episodes of their experience. They were invited to illustrate how they related to those situations and the topic of the present research. For instance, they were asked what were the advantages and disadvantages of the usage of shopping lists or the online channel in those situations.

Fourteen candidates were interviewed during April 2020, selected with snowball sampling. In particular, an initial group of four people was contacted. Then, it was asked to those four people to contact other individuals. In the end, two members of the initial group were interviewed, while the other candidates were chosen among the initial group members' social networks. Sampling stopped when data reached saturation with the gathered information, that is to say when no new insights were gained with further interviews (Willig, 2001). At the end of the interview, all candidates were offered a symbolic reward. The majority decided to send a small donation to charity, while some of them did not accept it all. The pre-requisite to participate was, at least, one online grocery shopping experience.

Detailed information about interviewees' names, age, gender, education and major field of study, job, city of origin and family composition are available in Table 1, in the appendix. Candidates are all Italian and aged between twenty-three and thirty-eight years old (twenty-eight point four on average). Nine of them are female, while five are male. Few of them are unemployed, while others work as managers or employees in various areas, spacing from marketing to human resources. All candidates hold a master's degree, except one, who has pursued a bachelor's degree. Major fields of study include economics, modern literature, psychology and management.

The in-depth interview format permitted to address a high level of focus on consumer behaviour understanding, dedicating a consistent amount of time to each candidate (the

individual interviews lasted forty minutes on average). Moreover, a certain degree of diversity was ensured among the analised sample, especially considering, for instance, each individuals' family composition, since both singles and members of couples/larger families were interviewed. In addition to that, candidates were born in various cities across Italy, spacing from Northern to Southern areas.

3.2. Data analysis

Interviews were, with prior candidates' consent, recorded and transcripted. The interview scripts represented raw data for the research. The first step consisted in dividing the interviewees among candidates that evaluated shopping lists as time-saving for online grocery shopping and the ones that did not. Then, raw data were analysed to understand the motives behind each of the two situations, using the principles of grounded theory.

According to grounded theory, as developed by the two American sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, what results from data collection and analysis is grounded in the words and actions of the individuals under study - in this case, the interviewees (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2005). Indeed, each interview's script was analysed line by line. Words or sentences with similar meanings were linked together and coded. Codes were compared, in order to find similarities and connect them, generating first-order concepts. Afterward, first-order concepts were examined to identify a higher level of generalisation, with axial coding procedure: indeed, first-order concepts were, again, compared to analise whether they showed similarities one with another. When they did, second-order concepts were generated (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The analysis was conducted with the support of Nvivo, a qualitative analysis software, which facilitated the process of coding, categorisation and comparison, with simultaneous interviews scripts.

As observed initially, interviewees were divided into two groups, according to

interviewees' evaluation of whether shopping lists should or should not be considered as time-saving for online grocery shopping. However, this categorisation does not have to be confused with the final step theorised for grounded theory, where a core category is created with theoretical coding, linking categories and subcategories. Indeed, the core category represents a theory explaining a phenomenon, while "considering the usage of shopping lists as time-saving or not for online grocery shopping" are treated, for the purposes of this research, as two distinct phenomena. Instead, the present study did not proceed with core categorisation. Otherwise, the concepts would result as too abstract.

According to grounded theory guidelines, data were analysed based on their content, avoiding preconceptions related to existing frameworks in the literature (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Prior knowledge was not completely dismissed but was considered differently as the process evolved, maintaining an open-minded attitude as new concepts emerged from data (Goulding, 2005).

4. Results

4.1 First division of data

As anticipated in the previous section, the first step of the analysis consisted in understanding whether the interviewees considered shopping lists as time-saving or not for online grocery shopping, disregarding, momentaneously, the motives behind their evaluations. The objective was to understand whether the majority of candidates propended for one or the other position, by simply calculating the absolute and relative frequency in each case.

Prior to showing the results of this calculation, it must be taken into account that some interviewees' opinion has changed considering different types of shopping lists. Indeed, some candidates considered the pre-set shopping lists from previous purchases as time-saving, but not a traditional "pen-and-paper" shopping list. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this research,

both lists of previously bought items and "traditional pen-and-paper" shopping lists are considered as shopping lists. In addition to that, some participants listed different reasons for considering shopping lists as time-saving or not. They even related to possible situations outside their experience. However, when interviewees' motives will be analysed, their views on different circumstances will be taken into account and illustrated.

With these premises in mind, the first step of data analysis has shown how the majority of interviewees- eleven participants over fourteen (around eighty percent) - considered shopping lists as time-saving for online grocery shopping. In the next paragraphs, the motives behind this result will be analysed.

4.2 Motives

The second step of data analysis consisted in identifying the motives for considering or not considering shopping lists as time-saving for online grocery shopping. Therefore, the following exposition will highlight, first, the motives that emerged from considering shopping lists as time-saving. Then, the other situation (the "not time saving" case) motives will be illustrated. In particular, each subsection analyses the second-order themes that emerged from participants' interviews. First-order concepts and references to candidates' interviews will be used to discuss these second-order themes.

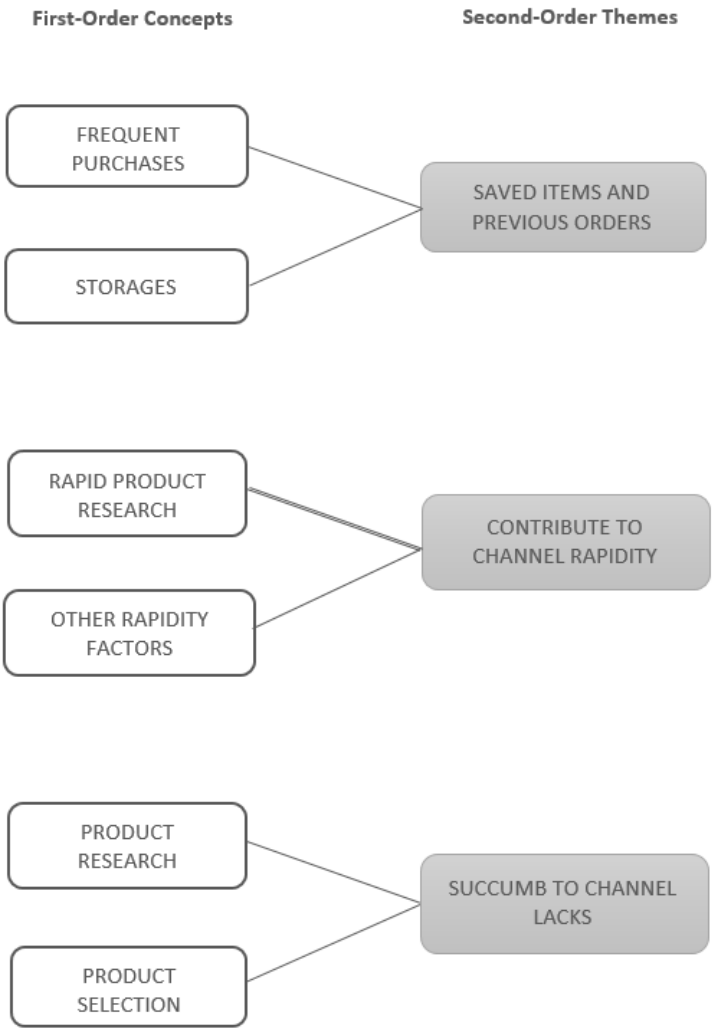
4.2.1 "Time saving" motives

As shown in Figure 1, three main motives have been recognised among the interviewed consumers who considered shopping lists as time-saving for online grocery shopping: "Saved Items and Previous Orders", "Contribute to Channel Rapidity" and "Succumb to Channel Lacks".

One of the main reasons why interviewees considered shopping lists as time-saving for online

grocery shopping is that online saved items/previous orders system is available. This categorisation is indicated in Figure 1 as "Saved Items and Previous Orders". Indeed, consumers are allowed to re-use saved orders from previous purchases. In general, they are allowed to save specific products. Since previous orders and saved preferences are represented by a list of items, they become a saved/reusable shopping list for future purchasing events. Interviewees defined this mechanism as time-saving in specific situations.

Figure 1: Motives for “Time Saving”



First, this mechanism may help the shopper each time s/he does a general grocery shopping since there might be products that are frequently purchased. Indeed, saved items represent a "ready to use, personalised" shopping lists and contribute to the creation of the final order, representing a useful "starting point" and orienting the rest of the shopping trip. Valerio (participant 13), who alternates the online and the physical channel for grocery shopping, reported: *"I see the difference in time-saving with shopping lists between the online and offline channel when I have the possibility of using my previous shopping cart because I have a starting point. If I use a web platform for the second time, the usefulness of a traditional shopping list decreases, because I have a list of items that I have bought previously. There are several products which, if I have purchased them the last time, it is probable that I also need the second time. It is not a traditional shopping list you have made, but it is a previous purchase that might serve as a starting point, it is sort of a ready-to-use shopping list. There is a core of products that I always buy (i.e. home care products, pasta, rice, water, oil, legumes) and some others that change*".

Moreover, Arianna (participant 12) often purchases grocery on "L'Alveare.it", where she and her boyfriend are allowed to buy higher quality and more sustainable products than the ones they would find in mainstream traditional supermarkets. She stated: "*The channels we use have some already bought items sections and you focus more on that. The traditional shopping list becomes superfluous. We have the "already bought items" section, we go there and buy products that we already liked. It is almost like sort of a shopping list ad hoc for us, almost a personalized shopping list*".

In addition to that, saved shopping lists may be useful for planned "storages", that is to say, planned purchases in terms of specific recurrent items and frequencies. Indeed, some consumers may already know, considering their habits, that they usually buy a certain amount of a certain product with a certain frequency. Therefore, they have a ready to use shopping list

that simplifies their task of planning the shopping event for those products.

As Marco (participant 8) suggests: "*If one individual is sure that s/he will buy a specific basket of products every two weeks, that individual saves time for sure because the previous order is saved, pre-set and ready to use. S/he makes these purchases by default. For instance, s/he has planned one month in advance that will receive those products every two Saturdays from that moment on. S/he already has a saved shopping list and s/he has saved time*". This may be the case of Vincenzo (participant 14), who prefers to buy fresh products at the physical supermarket, but often uses the online channel for other types of products and referred: "*If I know, based on my consumption habits, that I need eighteen bottles of water per week, two packs of paper for the kitchen, I can use a predifined shopping cart and use that every time. In that case, the difference between online and offline channels is important in terms of time saved*."

Shopping lists may help in saving time for online grocery shopping since they contribute to the online channel rapidity ("Contribute to Channel Rapidity" second-order theme is shown in Figure 1). Indeed, some interviewees believe that shopping lists help in saving time independently from the online channel. Moreover, they believe that doing grocery shopping online, instead of in traditional physical stores, is time-saving. For this reason, the use of shopping lists "enforces" online channel rapidity, and, overall, the time lag of online grocery shopping ulteriorly decreases, thanks to shopping lists. In particular, participants defined shopping lists as memory aids to not forget items and to stay focused on the necessary ones. At the same time, they recognised that both the product research process and other characteristics of the online channel allow to save time. Therefore, the combined use of shopping lists and online channel reduces the overall time lag.

Federico (participant 6), who considers rapidity as a priority for grocery shopping, believes the main advantage of shopping list usage is saving time: "*I use a shopping list both*

online and at the physical store. You avoid not remembering what to buy and going around the supermarket, you go directly to pick what you need. You save time". In addition to that, Federico referred: "*I am always in a hurry and this is the exact reason why I always use a shopping list* (..) *Since I moved to Milan, last year, I went to live on my own. So I had to start doing the grocery shopping. I had to clean the house, while I was, at the same time, working, leaving early in the morning and coming back late, doing sport/physical activity, personal study, going out with friends* (…) *With online grocery shopping, you save a lot of time in choosing the products and you save time with home delivery*".

Moreover, Sabrina (participant 5) stated how "*shopping lists help in saving time, because you already know what you have to buy when you enter the supermarket, either online or offline. You are less distracted from other categories or products. So I believe that shopping lists are useful to optimise time. Online you save more time because in egrocery platforms products are already well organized by categories, while the physical supermarket, for instance with promotion stands, might be more confusing*." Sabrina also considered promotions research mechanism as more efficient online: "*On the website, particularly a user-friendly one, promotions are better highlighted, more than in a physical supermarket, that might be crowded, confusing, where you are more distracted. Online they better catch the attention. For instance, if I inserted a cleaning product on my shopping list, online promotions on that product better catch my attention.*".

However, some interviewees, even recognising that the combined use of shopping lists and online channel increases the shopping event's rapidity, claimed that they would rather spend more time in the physical store. This is the case of Judith (participant 3): "*I believe online grocery shopping allows you to save time. For people who care about details, it is easier to find some items informations, such as ingredients. It is also possible to see which products are available immediately* (…) *For younger people, it may be easier to search for and find a*

product online than at the supermarket". Judith adds: "*However, after a while, I believe you get annoyed by looking at the Ipad* (…) *At the physical supermarket, you can go around…you spend more time, sure doing the grocery shopping online is time-saving…but I believe the experience at the supermarket is more pleasant, you "lose time" more willingly*".

On a similar page, Charlotte (participant 4) claims that rapidity may "sacrifice" other needs: "*The advantage of using a shopping list is to have a memory aid that allows you to save time. If you take note of what you have to buy, when you are at the store, you already know what you have to look for. Then, it is for sure a way to save time. Not having a shopping list leads you to spend much more time, but it is also true that it leads you to discover many more products, because you do not go directly towards the product that you have planned to buy, but you are more prone to space and to consider different products*".

According to interviewees, shopping lists may also succumb to lacks of the online channel ("Succumb to Online Channel Lacks" second-order theme is shown in Figure 1). Indeed, some features of online grocery shopping increase the purchasing time lag. In this case, shopping lists enable to save time. In fact, interviewees reported various disadvantages related to the time spent for online grocery shopping, that may be "recovered" with the aid of a shopping list.

For instance, this is the case of Martina (participant 11). She sits in the kitchen with her boyfriend each week to carefully plan the weekly menu. According to the final decision, they list the items to buy. Martina believes that shopping lists are useful, in terms of time-saving, both online and offline and she believes that certain characteristics of the online channel increase the time lag. As Martina referred: "*I believe shopping lists would contribute to saving time both online and offline. The difference is given online by some limitations that I have experienced in choosing products*". Those limitations regarded the analysis of product characteristics, especially the ingredients, and the comparison with other items.

Martina stated: "*I care particularly about ingredients* (…) *On the websites, for instance on Amazon Prime Now, you can check them, it depends on the quality of the image. But sometimes, the ingredients' section is not well shown. Esselunga's website is designed better, each product description reports the ingredients list, independently from the picture. But, sometimes, you can pick an item, and then that item is not available for the delivery. It is either substituted, or you do not receive it. When I am in the physical store, I can see the availability of products, the effective quality, and differences among products in the same category*".

Moreover, according to Martina, comparisons between products of the same category are more consuming online: "*At the physical supermarket, I can have an overall picture of more products* (…) *I like to be at the shelf, having a clear disposition that permits me to distinguish "which brand at what price" and to make comparisons basing on the product weight. I could do this also with online grocery shopping, but it would require more effort, a continuous going back and forth to search for the products to compare: a micro screen (a mobile phone), where you have to search for products, go back and forth, scroll endlessly to then find products not related one with another… I feel it takes longer. I feel that at the physical supermarket it takes less because it is more familiar*".

Giulia (participant 10), who recently experienced online grocery shopping for the first time, expressed a similar opinion. She did not use a shopping list, but she believes it would have made her product research more efficient: "*I would have been more focused while I was looking for the products. I would have not been going category by category to see what I would need, I would have had a list in advance. At the physical store I get less lost, I know the disposition, I know where to look for products, online it is not always clear. This is why I believe that shopping lists might be useful also for online grocery shopping*".

In addition to that, Marco (participant 8, as previously mentioned), who prefers to plan his online grocery shopping and buy many items per occasion, referred that the main obstacle,

that may be relieved with the usage of shopping lists, consists in not being able to apply certain criteria to the product research: "*I believe that online (I refer to Esselunga because I use this platform) it is, on retailer's purpose, difficult to find certain products, especially if they have a convenient quality/price rate. They highlight on purpose certain products, but a more careful consumer, as I consider myself, struggles in finding what s/he looks for. So I have to take note of everything I want to buy. Otherwise, I am not able to use my parameters*".

Marco believes that shopping lists contribute to saving time "*because they help you in addressing the selection of the products you want to buy*". However, he recognises that, in order to save time, consumers need a certain degree of flexibility, otherwise shopping lists are not a useful aid: "*When you don't find that specific product, you have to make an alternative choice, and you need some flexibility in choosing one channel instead of the other because one product is available in one channel and not in the other one*".

4.2.2. "Not time-saving" motives

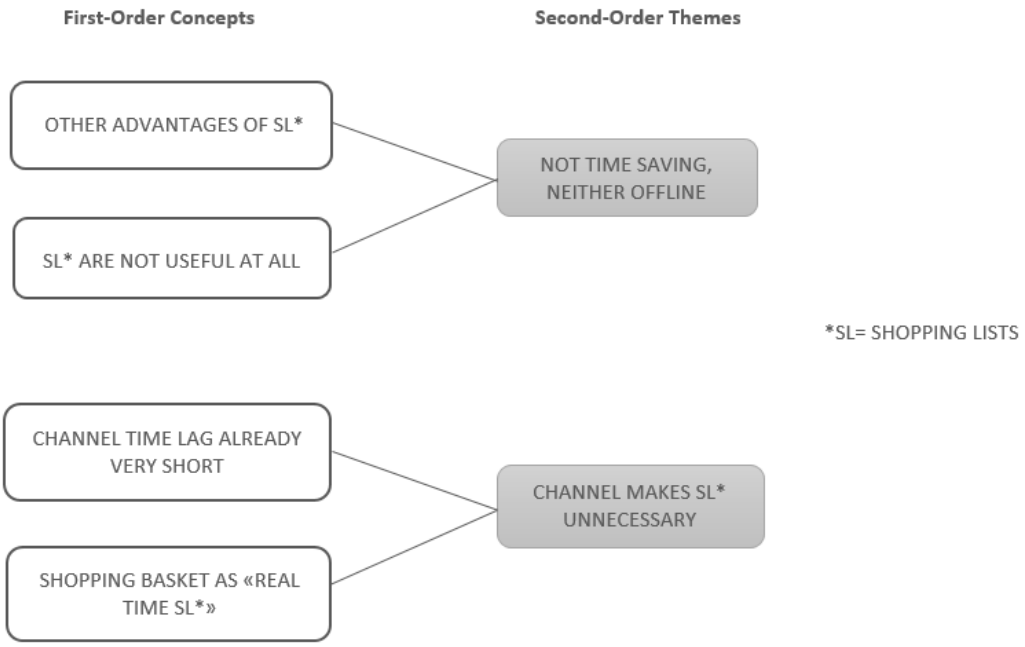
As shown in Figure 2 below, 2 main motives have been recognised among the interviewed consumers who did not consider shopping lists as time- saving for online grocery shopping: "Not Time Saving, neither Online" and "Channel makes Shopping Lists Unnecessary".

Shopping lists may not be a useful aid to save time for online grocery shopping, since, as some interviewees referred, shopping lists do not help at all in saving time, neither using the online nor the offline channel ("Not Time Saving, Neither Offline second-order theme in Figure 2). While some participants do not recognise any usefulness in the usage of shopping lists, and they even report to never have used them, some others believe there are other advantages related to the usage of shopping lists, rather than increasing rapidity. Indeed, according to some participants, shopping lists do not enable to save time because there are different purposes in

shopping lists' usage.

For instance, Claudia (participant 1) has recently moved to Treviso, to join her family. Previously, she was set in Rome, where she was working and living on her own. When she was living in Rome, she was not used to making shopping lists, except for very few items. She believes that shopping lists are useful for families and not for saving time purposes.

Figure 2: Motives for "Not Time Saving"



As Claudia referred: "*I believe the role of the shopping lists is more practical, I believe shopping lists are used more by people that live with their partner or with their family, where each component has his or her need. It also depends a lot on the eating habits, but normally who just has to buy and cook for him/herself does not plan in large advance what to cook. So, more than saving time, it is a practical level, it is a priority level, you first give the priority to the items on the shopping lists and then, both in the physical and in the online store, you look around to see if there is anything else*". Moreover, Claudia believes that in familiar contexts

shopping lists help in saving money during online grocery shopping, where promotions are better highlighted: "*When someone does the online grocery shopping for the family, the shopping list is very useful to save money, because you tend to favour those products that are in promotion, by choosing to make a meal with the items that are in promotion*".

Matteo (participant 9) does not see shopping lists as an aid to save time as well. He even considers them as a limitation: "*I do not use shopping lists neither online nor offline, because normally I already know more or less what I need to buy. Moreover, when I am at the store, I see, at the moment, some more things that interest me and I buy them anyway. I see the shopping list as a limitation, following a shopping list would mean that I had to buy those listed items and then stop. Instead, I want to have a margin of freedom, especially when I am at the physical store. Maybe I want to buy strawberries, but then I see that the ones there do not inspire me, so I do not list it. I see the strawberries that are there, if I like them I buy them, otherwise no*". Moreover, Matteo stated that "*If you still get distracted by other items, you go around the supermarket and stare to look at new products on the shelves, then it is not time-saving. I do not believe that shopping lists make me save time*".

Shopping lists may not help consumers in saving time during online grocery shopping, also considering an additional aspect. Indeed, some online channel's characteristics already make the shopping trip so efficient, that there is not any margin of improvement left. In other words, the online channel reduces the time lag already, so much that the usage of shopping lists becomes unnecessary (in Figure 2, "Channel Makes Shopping Lists Unnecessary").

In particular, some interviewees reported that online the order becomes a "real-time shopping list", narrowing significantly the distinction between a shopping list and a shopping order. For instance, Matteo formulated a specific consideration related to the online channel. The utility of using an external shopping list decreases drastically since the consumer shops at home, checking which product s/he needs to buy by simply inspecting the kitchen. As Matteo

referred: "*Online, you keep filling your shopping bag, and if you look at the summary of your shopping bag, you see a list. It is like an "auto-filling" shopping list. Before you pay, you are able to modify your order, a list of items, and you can choose whether you want to add or remove some items. So, in my opinion, it does not make sense to make a shopping list in advance, before the grocery shopping. You have sort of a "real-time" shopping list. A shopping list made in advance does not help in saving time: you are at home, you open your fridge, you look at your kitchen shelves, you see which products you miss and add the products to the order instantaneously*".

Marta (participant 7), as well, stated that the online channel "immediateness" reduces the need of making a list to save time: "*I do not enter the website and look for many products that I have listed, I go to Amazon and buy immediately that product I remember is over. Afterward, I remember I finished one other product, immediately enter Amazon and buy it. It is an immediate need for a single purchasing and I do it without the need for a shopping list*".

Moreover, Monica (participant 2) considers the online channel as particularly efficient and time-saving, considering, for instance, the possibility of not going in person to the store and the rapidity of product research. In her view, traditional shopping lists and even pre-set previous orders are very marginal in terms of time-saving. As Monica reported: "*I think if I did not use my saved "already bought items" shopping list, it would take 5 mins more, nothing special* (…) *even without this possibility I would do grocery shopping online because I really just save those very few products that I always buy, but I chose the other products manually, every time I do the online grocery shopping* (…) *I choose the other items especially basing on promotions. It is handy, because the website is organized by product categories, so it is fast anyway, even though I do not use my shopping list. There is a drop-down menu divided by categories and then, for each category, there is a sub-category, where all the available products are shown. Or you can directly search for the product* (…) *I do online grocery shopping during the evening.*

I also do that on my mobile phone. I go to bed, I am comfortable and I finish a 150/180 euros grocery shopping in 15/20 mins. Going to the physical store requires too much time, even just placing the items inside the shopping bags".

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The results in the previous section have shown how the majority of interviewees consider shopping lists as time-saving. In addition to that, numerous motives emerged, more than in the "not time saving" case. This general overview highlights how the results seem to partially contrast with present literature. First, they contradict the assumption that shopping lists usage for digital grocery purchasing may not apport any time-saving benefit since the online channel reduces the time lag already (Davydenko & Peetz, 2020).

As observed, almost eighty percent of the interviewees reported that shopping lists did apport additional time-saving benefits for online grocery shopping. Some of them did not see the online channel as a time saving expedient, while others reported that the online channel reduced the duration of the shopping process. Therefore, there was not an unequivocal causality between the usage of shopping lists and the fact that the online channel did not reduce the time lag. The same observation is valid when considering the case in which consumers evaluated shopping lists as not time-saving. Some of them stated that they did not consider shopping lists as useful in saving time since the online channel reduces the time lag already. However, it was not a univocal reason expressed by participants, since some of them reported that they did not consider shopping lists as time-saving at all, neither online nor offline.

Moreover, past research has mainly underlined the rapidity of the online channel, suggesting that e-grocery convenience should be interpreted in terms of utilitarian considerations (Melisetal.,2016; Noble et al., 2005). This may be true, also considering other

factors, such as consumers' comfort of receiving the purchased items directly at home, without having to go in person to the store- this aspect was not part of the present investigation. However, the motives that emerged from this study show how part of the interviewees believe that the product research process lacks efficiency and does not enable to save time.

Indeed, some participants reported difficulties in finding items on the online platform. These consumers made a comparison with the physical store's familiarity and also observed how being able to check the product characteristics in person would facilitate the task. Therefore, the assumption of measuring the time-saving effectiveness of the online channel by merely comparing the "click" moment with the action of picking a product from the shelf may not provide a complete understanding of the topic.

Nonetheless, interviewees reported that, in certain situations, the online channel does simplify their grocery shopping task with the possibility of concluding the purchase with a simple click. These situations correspond to the ones where consumers have to buy standard products and purchases are repeated. Participants mentioned saved previous orders and preferences, that they would consider as their shopping lists. In this case, the results seem to confirm Anesbury et al. (2016) suggestion that saved cookies and preferences may simplify the product research task.

5.2 Practical Implications

These findings may support e-grocery retailers in offering better-targeted solutions to the market, leveraging separately on standard/repeated purchases and other items. They may, on one side, further develop the saved orders mechanism for certain types of products. Amazon, for instance, has already implemented the "Subscribe and Save" program for periodic provisions. Interested consumers are enabled to program their grocery shopping for repeated purchases, by selecting a certain quantity (there is a minimum amount required) and frequency

for a certain item, such as toilet paper, coffee capsules and laundry detergents. Traditional great distribution's grocery retailers may design similar services, taking advantage of their consolidated experience in the industry.

On the other hand, players in the grocery retailing sector may develop a different approach for other "less standard" types of items. As it was observed, some interviewees expressed their interest and even pleasure in spending time looking for product attributes and characteristics in person. If retailers' objective is to expand their digital channel's customer base, they may need to also address this segment. In other words, they would need to offer these customers' a better- or, at least, equivalent- experience in terms of product inspection. They may try to stimulate their interest, for instance, with augmented reality, to recreate the familiarity of the physical store and enable consumers to check product characteristics.

5.3 Limitations and further research

The proposed study presents some limitations that future research may address. These limitations are mainly procedural, due to constraints in the methodology adopted.

First, the sample numerosity was too small to generalise findings and results to a wider population. In the present context, it was not possible to use a more broadening sampling criterion, due to time constraints. Indeed, the interviews were in-depth and, since this permitted a deep understanding of each candidate's perspective, it also required a high level of dedication.

Moreover, even though the sampling procedure allowed for a certain degree of diversity, further research may extend to different targets. For instance, the present study was limited to individuals of Italian nationality, who may present a specific approach to grocery shopping. Considering consumers from different geographic areas, with different consumption habits, may provide additional useful insights. Moreover, research may also extend to older interviewees, since age could represent a significant factor in determining online grocery

shopping behaviour, while this study's eldest participant was thirty-eight- Table 1 is available for more details.

6. Conclusions

Investigating the contribution of shopping lists in saving time during online grocery shopping permitted to identify implications on the product research process. In particular, some assumptions in the literature regarding digital channel rapidity may need further discussion, considering that part of interviewed consumers did not evaluate product research as a rapid and easy task. E-grocery retailers may benefit from this discussion and develop new solutions, to ensure a successful transition between today's boost in digital interactions and tomorrow's "new normal".

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Appendix

Interview questions

1) Can you recall the last time you did online grocery shopping?
2) Was it the first time? (If no) how often do you do online grocery shopping?
3) Can you explain why did you decide to do online grocery shopping, instead of going to the physical store?
4) What were the advantages and disadvantages that you have experienced?
5) Can you think of any additional aid that have or might have helped you?
6) Have you used a shopping list? Had you ever used one before, including offline?
7) Can you please try to explain how did you create it (online and offline, if there was any difference)?
8) Do you believe is there any advantage or disadvantage in using a shopping list that

depends on the type of channel?

9) Would you generalise your consideration of your last online shopping experience or was there anything peculiar about it?
10) Do you think time saving was an important characteristic of your last online experience? (If no) Can you think of any grocery shopping situation in which you felt that saving time was particularly important for you?
11) Do you think that the type of channel (online or offline) has helped you in saving time?
12) Do you think that switching to another channel might have helped you?
13) Can you think of any additional aid that have or might have helped you saving time?
14) Do you think shopping lists are helpful in saving time?
15) Your answer to the previous question might change considering just the online channel?
16) Your answer to the previous question might change considering just your first experience online?

Table 1: Participants' demographics

Name	Gender	Age	City of origin	Education	Major field of study	Profession	Family Composition (#members)
*Claudia	F	29	Treviso	Master	Marketing	Family Business	> 2
Monica	F	38	Milano	Master	Modern Literature	Teacher	> 2
**Judith	F	26	Roma	Master	Phsichology	Marketing Employee	> 2
Charlotte	F	27	Pordenone	Master	Innovation and Marketing	Digital Specialist	1
Sabrina	F	31	Taranto	Master	Economics	Marketing Manager	1
Federico	M	23	Roma	Bachelor	Phsichology	Employer Branding and Social Media Analyst	1

Marta	F	27	Varese	Master	International Management	Marketing Employee	1
Marco	M	29	Torre del Greco	Master	Human Resources Management	Human Resources Employee	2
Matteo	M	27	Milano	Master	Management	Junior Brand Manager	1
Giulia	F	25	Taranto	Master	Phsichology	Unemployed	1
Martina	F	25	Cosenza	Master	Phsichology	Unemployed	2
Arianna	F	25	Lamezia Terme	Master	Phsichology	Unemployed	2
Valerio	M	34	Milano	Master	Economics	Economist	> 2
Vincenzo	M	32	Lecce	Master	Economics	Manager	> 2

Notes: Claudia has recently moved with her family, previously she was living alone. Judith often visits her boyfriend.